



American Academy of Physician Assistants

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August 10, 2006

Patricia A. Maryland, Ph.D.
Chair, Citizens' Health Care
Working Group
7201 Wisconsin Avenue
Suite 575
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

Dear Dr. Maryland:

On behalf of the nearly 60,000 clinically practicing physician assistants (PAs) who are represented by the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), I am pleased to submit comments on the ***Interim Recommendations of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group***. The AAPA and the physician assistant profession are committed to working with federal and state legislatures and all involved parties to plan and implement a fair and comprehensive reform of the United States health care system.

Although AAPA policy does not propose to restructure the way that palliative care, hospice care, and other end-of-life services are financed and provided, the other interim recommendations made by the Citizens' Health Care Working Group closely resemble longstanding policy adopted by the Academy. Like the Citizens' Health Care Working Group, the Academy believes that the primary goal of comprehensive health care system reform is to ensure access to quality, affordable, and cost efficient health care for all residents of the United States. The Academy supports a health care system that will provide basic services, including all mainstream medical, dental, and mental health services, to all residents. And the Academy values the important role of rural health clinics, community health centers, and other federally qualified health centers in providing care to medically underserved populations.

AAPA also endorses several health care reform principles that were not included among the interim recommendations of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group. They are:

- The AAPA supports health care that is delivered by qualified providers in physician-directed teams, who should be held to the highest professional standards of evidence-based care and medical ethics.
- The AAPA supports reform that confronts the limits of care and resources, including cost controls that focus on the economies generated by health promotion and disease prevention through the optimal use of primary care; research and development of clinical

pathways that provide high quality patient care at reasonable cost; the elimination of excessive administrative and management costs; the redesign of reimbursement mechanisms to discourage unnecessary and inappropriate utilization of care; and the elimination of cost shifting.

- The AAPA believes that fair and comprehensive reform of the medical liability insurance system is needed, one which goes beyond tort reform alone and whose impact is borne equitably by attorneys, insurers, providers, and patients.
- The AAPA endorses system reform that enhances the relationship between the patient and the clinician. Clinicians have an obligation to educate patients regarding health promotion, disease prevention, and how to select from among evidenced-based treatment options. But ultimately, the patients, and when appropriate, the patient's family, should be the decision makers regarding treatment after receiving competent, evidence-based medical advice.

Additionally, AAPA believes that physician/PA teams are the most cost effective way to provide quality physician services. Innovations in medical education should be a priority of comprehensive health system reform, along with the identification of new ways to utilize the health care workforce.

We all know that developing principles on health care reform will be the easiest part of enacting a meaningful health care system that provides basic health care services to all individuals and families residing in the United States. Any health system reform must honestly confront the actual cost of providing care, medical education, and health related research, and budget appropriately. Difficult decisions will be unavoidable, and political resolve will be a necessity.

The AAPA looks forward to the continued work of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group. Should you have any questions regarding the PA profession or the Academy's views on health care system reform, please do not hesitate to contact Sandy Harding, AAPA's Director of Federal Affairs, at 703/836-2272, extension 3205, or via email at sandra@aapa.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen C. Crane", is positioned to the left of a vertical red line.

Stephen C. Crane, PhD, MPH
Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer